Case Study:
Improving Staff Communication and Response Time through Mobile Technology

covia

VOCERA

Categories:
- Reduced Response Time
- Reduced Incidences
- Increased Resident/Staff/Family Safety and Satisfaction

About the Organization

Organization Name: Covia

Main Contributor:
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Organization Type: Assisted Living Organizations

Organization Description:
Covia is a California nonprofit, public benefit corporation that is more than 50 years old. Its mission is to cultivate and build healthy communities with a continuum of residential and innovative aging services that actively promote intellectual, physical, social, and spiritual well-being. Covia's primary business is to own and operate retirement communities known as Life Plan or Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs). Currently, there are six communities, located in Pacific Grove, Oakland, Los Gatos, Santa Rosa, Palo Alto, and San Francisco. Each of these communities holds a Certificate of Authority (COA) granted by the California Department of Social Services allowing it to enter into contractual agreements that promise care for the remainder of the resident's lives.

Project Description

On a mission to consistently deliver a five-star experience for its residents, Covia sought to improve staff communication and response times. Covia selected the Vocera Platform to enable Wi-Fi communication and replace a fragmented system by integrating Vocera technology with the resident safety system in place throughout six of its multi-level senior living communities. Taking safety to the next level, Covia also integrated the Vocera system with the communities' resident safety solution, which enables alarms and alerts to go directly to the right staff member's Vocera Badge or app.

Safety Technology Category

Emergency Notification/Communication/Response System

System Embodiment

Badge and Smartphone app

Business Model

Private Pay

Implementation Approach

Leadership at Covia was looking to improve staff ability to respond quickly when an independent or assisted living resident needed help. Despite having modern Wi-Fi infrastructures in all its communities, they identified certain operational workflows with fragmented and poorly integrated communications. The gaps and disconnects between communication tools made it hard for staff members to work together efficiently and serve residents consistently.

Two of Covia's communities were beginning to plan an expensive radio system replacement when the organization recognized an opportunity to implement a more efficient solution throughout all its communities. Covia leadership knew they wanted to use their existing Wi-Fi infrastructure to improve staff communication overall. They decided that the Vocera Platform, which provides clinical communication and workflow solutions that let caregivers text securely with smartphones or make voice calls hands-free with the wearable Vocera Badge, was the best solution for their organization.

Covia moved quickly to integrate the Vocera Platform with its resident safety solution. All alarms now pass automatically to the Vocera system for routing to the appropriate

designated responder through a community-customized workflow. Each alert is delivered as both voice and text messages that include the resident's first name, last initial, location, and the type of event. All alert data originates in the resident safety system and flows automatically to the Vocera system.

The integration of Vocera technology with Covia's life-safety system is very similar to having a dedicated community 911 center. By eliminating the delays once caused by manual dispatching and unreliable radio links, Vocera allows staff respond to urgent resident needs faster and more intelligently. It also improves worker efficiency by eliminating the need to continuously staff a dispatch workstation.

Covia staff have seen an improvement in routine staff communication; it's easier to coordinate activities, get information, or summon assistance. With Vocera, team members can locate each other no matter where they are or what they're doing, from one end of the campus to the other. They don't have to walk to the nurse station to check messages or drop what they're doing to pick up a phone or a radio. Covia is now providing a level of service more often associated with the hospitality industry.

Outcomes

◆ Reduced Response Time
◆ Increased Resident/Staff/Family Safety and Satisfaction
◆ Increased Peace of Mind

Challenges and Pitfalls to Avoid

Introducing a new technology or workflow can be challenging for some staff members to learn and adopt. Speech recognition and knowing the right voice commands also can be challenging initially. With teamwork and refresher training for long-time and new employee, these challenges can easily be overcome. From a technical perspective, it is important to have a robust wireless infrastructure to mitigate any potential gaps in coverage.

If you have any wireless dead spots, be sure to calculate the cost of improving your wireless network coverage and reliability into your budget.

Lessons Learned/Advice to Share with Others

Inherent barriers in healthcare communication include distance, location, and/or layout of departments and buildings. Nurses and other care team members often walk the length of football fields over and over addressing resident needs and looking for people or resources. To save valuable time and simplify workflows, a reliable mobile communication solution is needed to connect residents to staff, staff to staff, and staff to residents – no matter the location. When considering a communication system, identify and deploy one that is flexible, secure, and can integrate with multiple clinical and operational systems.

When evaluating a health IT solution, select one that is scalable across the enterprise and has a proven track record of success and sustainable value. It is also important that the adoption and/or implementation of an enterprise-wide solution be considered as a strategic business initiative of the organization, and not a solo endeavor or initiative of the health IT department or clinician(s). It is important to have all stakeholders collaborate and define a unified strategy when analyzing and adopting new technologies so that effective courses of action can be developed that will improve the success of any health IT implementation.

In addition, the term "support staff engagement" must be adopted when discussing and delivering health IT solutions. The terms "clinician engagement" and "provider engagement" are used often in the engagement and communication conversation, but "support staff" is rarely heard. Yet, the support staff also are responsible for much of the care and comfort of aged care residents. Be sure to listen to all frontline team members and collaborate with them on selecting, implementing and designing new technologies and workflows.